US Appln No. 09/943,366 - 2

Amendments To The Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of the claims in the application.

Listing of the Claims:

1. (Currently amended). A fuel cell system comprising a plurality of fuel cells, a heat exchanger, at least one cooling fan adapted to direct a cooling air flow through sadi heat exchanger, an air branching device adapted to branch off at least part of the cooling air flow delivered by said at least one cooling fan, a duct for receiving said branched-off air flow and for directing it to said fuel cells for the purpose of at least one of starting of the fuel cells and maintenance of the operation of the fuel cells and wherein the heat exchanger is positioned adjacent said fan and so that cooling air produced by the fan flows first through the heat exchange and thereafter into the fuel cells.

2 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said air branching device is formed by a fixed guide wall.

3. (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said air branching device has a first position and a second position in which it brings about the branching off of air from the cooling air flow, said air branching device being movable between said first and second positions.

4. (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said at least one cooling fan is a pusher fan arranged upstream of the heat exchanger.

5. (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 4 and further comprising a housing disposed upstream of said heat exchanger, said at least one fan being connected to said heat exchanger by means of said housing.

6. (Currently amended). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim [[1]] 3 and further comprising an air guiding housing arranged downstream of said heat exchanger directly adjacent the latter.

7 (Currently amended). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim [[3]] 6, wherein said air branching device is realized by adjustable plates, said adjustable plates having a first position permitting air moving through said heat exchanger to pass between them and a second position in which they close against one another to supply air to said duct leading to said fuel cells.

8. (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said air guiding housing has a downstream side and said plates are arranged at said downstream side.

9. (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said plates are arranged in a manner of a louver window.

10 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said plates are arranged in a manner of an iris diaphragm and have a first state closed against each other in which they define a central opening, said duct leading to said fuel cells having an entry and said entry lying opposite to said central opening.

11 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 7, wherein said plates are arranged in a manner of a roller shutter.

12 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 6, and further comprising an air collecting box, said air collecting box extending over a region of said guiding housing not covered in the air branching position by said branching device, said duct leading to said fuel cells having a connection and said air branched off by said branching device being supplied to said connection.

13 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 12, wherein said air collecting box has a collecting aperture and wherein said air branching device is formed by a roller blind having a closed position in which sadi roller blind adjoins said air collecting box, but does not close said collecting box.

14 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 6, wherein said air guiding housing has an air outlet side, wherein air branching device is adapted to completely close off sear air outlet side and wherein said air guiding housing has a connection for said duct leading to said fuel cells.

15. (Currently amended) A fuel cell system in accordance with claim [[3]] 7, wherein a positioning motor is provided, said positioning motor being attached to said air guiding housing for position of said plates.

16 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1 and further comprising a compressor having a housing and adapted to feed oxygen to said fuel cells in normal operations, wherein said duct leading to said fuel cells extends into said housing of the compressor.

17 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein sadi duct leading to said fuel cells leads directly to said fuel cells.

18 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 6, wherein an air filter is provided in said air collecting box.

19 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein an air filter is provided in said duct leading to said fuel cells.

20 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1, wherein said cooling fan, said heat exchanger and air branching device form a module.

21 (Previously presented). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 5, said housing connecting said at least one fan to said heat exchanger having a connection for said duct leading to said fuel cells.

22 (Currently amended). A fuel cell system in accordance with claim 1 and adapted for said cooling flow to satisfy at least one further cooling task after passing through the heat exchanger prior to being discharged into an environment of said ~~cooling fan~~ fuel cell system.

Claims 23-24 (canceled).